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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001961

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TAGS: PGOV PREL CG
SUBJECT: KATUMBA STEPS OUT OF THE SHADOWS

REF: KINSHASA 477

Classified By: Poloff Edward Bestic for Reasons 1.5 B and D

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On 25 July, GDRC President Joseph Kabila named eminence grise Augustin Katumba Mwanke Secretary-General of the DRC's transitional government. Kabila officially suspended Katumba in October 2002 following publication of the UN panel report on illegal exploitation of the DRC's wealth; however, Katumba's influence continued unabated. The role of the Secretary-General is unclear, and will doubtless be a subject of debate between ex-rebel movements and members of Kabila's camp. END SUMMARY.

A Suspension in Name Only

¶2. (C) On 25 July, GDRC President Joseph Kabila named Augustin Katumba Mwanke as Secretary-General of the transitional government. Considered a hardliner, Katumba is a longtime Kabila associate and former governor of Katanga province. He served as Minister of the Presidency until October 2002, when Kabila suspended him and several other members of the GDRC's ruling elite who were cited in a report by the U.N. Panel on Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth.

¶3. (C) Despite the suspension, Katumba continued to play a major role, exerting influence personally as well as through allies such as Guillaume Samba Kaputo, Kabila's deputy chief of staff. He was intimately involved with the Inter-Congolese Dialogue political negotiations until their conclusion in December 2002 and has a hand in the ongoing negotiations on military-security integration. In the months leading up to the formation of the DRC's transitional government, it was rumored that he was bucking to replace Jean Mbuyu as Kabila's Special Adviser on security matters.

What Responsibilities?

¶4. (C) The transitional constitution is azy on the Secretary-General's role and responsibilities. It merely says that he "...assists the resident and Vice-Presidents in coordinating govrnmental action" by "preparing meetings, works ad all dossiers requiring the concerted attention o the President and Vice-Presidents and at the cabinet level." (Note: Informal poloff translation. End note.) According to Kabila's 25 July decree, four Executive Secretaries will assist Katumba one per vice-presidential "commission." The for are:

--Political, Defense and Security Commission - Shadrac Baitsura Musowa of the RCD-Goma. H is a Nande from South Kivu, has a background in intelligence work, reportedly an associate of Biima Karaha.

--Economic and Financial Commission- Tshimanga Mwadi of the MLC. (Details unknown.)

--Reconstruction and Development Commission - Jlien Bukasa Kashama of the Kinshasa government. A Luba from Eastern Kasai, former career civil servant in Ministry of Finance and Budget.

--Soial and Cultural Commission - Egide Ngokoso of the political opposition. From Bandundu, a leader in Andre Boboliko's PDSC political party.

Reacton to Katumba's Return

15. (C) RCD-Goma official Jean-Marie Emungu wa circumspect in a 28 July telcon with poloff, sayng only that the RCD-Goma had "taken note" of the announcement. MLC official Thomas Luhaka told poloff on 29 July that it is better to have Katumba in an official position, where he will face public scrutiny. The Secretary-General's role should be strictly administrative; however, undoubtedly Katumba and his allies will seek to expand it.

COMMENT

16. (C) Having Katumba down amongst the vice-presidents will help Kabila maintain his image of being above the fray, and at the same time answers the question of where Katumba will fit into the new system. There will likely be a struggle over his exact role, with VP's Azarias Ruberwa of the RCD-Goma and Jean-Pierre Bemba of the MLC seeking to limit Katumba's powers. The International Committee to Support the Transition (CIAT) may be drawn into the debate, as CIAT members will need to decide whether they will want to deal with the transitional government through Katumba or interact directly with the four vice-presidents. END COMMENT.

HOOKS